



# NEWS RELEASE

## Defense Commissary Agency

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## Happy holiday dishes from our family to yours

*By Kay Blakley,  
DeCA home economist*

**FORT LEE, Va.** – The hustle and bustle of the holiday season can leave even the most organized person a little frazzled. So, as you're making your list and checking it twice, don't forget to plan what festive dishes you'll serve.

If your tradition is to open gifts on Christmas morning, the minute all the wrapping paper has been cleared away, hungry tummies will be clamoring for something delightful to appear on the table soon. Make a pot of Sweet Potato & Peanut Soup or Simple Pumpkin Soup a day ahead. Reheat it in a flash and serve as a first course, along with some crusty bread, while the rest of the meal is being prepared. Or, you could have a pan of Old Fashioned Gingerbread baking during the gift opening, and serve dessert first. Indulgences are allowed – after all, it's Christmas!

If something more substantial is in order, take a look at the Sausage and Egg Brunch Bake, the Williamsburg Bread or the Virginia Ham Fantastics recipes. They can all be assembled a day ahead, refrigerated overnight and baked the next morning.

For your main meal, whether it's served Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, consider the Cornish Hens with Wild Rice Stuffing recipe. It's easy, but makes an impressive spread. Only about an hour of oven time is required, and the results are wonderful. If ham is what you have in mind, the Apricot Glazed Ham recipe is sure to please. The Pork Tenderloin Medallions with Apricot Mostarda is out of the ordinary, very easy and quick to prepare. And, the top Loin Roast with Herb and Garlic Butter is tailor-made for serving a crowd or as a buffet offering.

Excellent side-dish and dessert recipes, some from commissary shoppers just like you, as well as helpful hints for roasting beef, pork and ham round out this week's collection of goodies.

To check out the recipes mentioned and listed here, along with the rest of our collection of classic holiday recipes, come to Kay's Kitchen at <http://www.commissaries.com>. Remember, you can purchase all your ingredients from the commissary at tremendous savings.

Happy Holidays from all of us at the commissary!

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### **Sausage and Egg Brunch Bake (Serves 12)**

#### Ingredients:

1 1/2 pounds bulk Italian pork sausage  
5 cups frozen country-style shredded hash-brown potatoes (from a 30-ounce package)  
1/2 cup sliced green onions  
2 (4.5-ounce) jars sliced mushrooms, drained  
1 (2.25-ounce) can sliced ripe olives, drained  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil  
3 cups shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese blend (12-ounces)  
8 eggs  
1 1/2 cups milk  
1/2 teaspoon salt

#### Topping

1 tablespoon olive or vegetable oil  
1 clove garlic, minced  
6 Italian plum tomatoes, chopped (about 2 cups)  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

#### Directions:

1. Spray a 13×9-inch glass baking dish and a 16×12-inch sheet of aluminum foil with cooking spray. Set aside.
2. In a large skillet, cook sausage over medium-high heat until no longer pink, stirring occasionally. Remove sausage from skillet; drain on paper towels.
3. In a large bowl, mix potatoes, onions, mushrooms, olives, 1 tablespoon chopped basil and 2 cups of the cheese. Add cooked sausage; stir gently to mix.
4. Spoon potato mixture evenly into baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining 1 cup cheese.
5. In same large bowl, beat the eggs. Add milk and 1/2 teaspoon salt; beat well. Pour over potato mixture in baking dish. Cover with foil, sprayed side down. Refrigerate at least 8 hours or overnight.
6. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Bake covered for 45 minutes; uncover and bake an additional 20 to 25 minutes longer or until center is set. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.
7. Meanwhile, prepare topping. In a medium skillet, heat oil over medium heat until hot. Add garlic; cook and stir for 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and 1/4 teaspoon salt; cook 2 to 3 minutes or until tomatoes are tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in 2 tablespoons basil.
8. Cut egg bake into squares, serve with warm topping.

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## **Pan-Seared Lamb Loin Chops with Mint Relish (Serves 4)**

### Ingredients:

#### Relish:

1/4 cup fresh parsley  
1/4 cup minced fresh mint  
3 tablespoons water  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon honey  
2 teaspoons minced shallot  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
Salt and pepper

#### Lamb:

4 (7-ounce) lamb chops, about 1 1/2 inches thick, trimmed of all visible fat  
2 teaspoons canola oil

### Directions:

1. For the relish: combine all relish ingredients in a serving bowl, season with salt and pepper to taste, and let sit while cooking the lamb.
2. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 450 degrees. Pat the chops dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper.
3. Heat the oil in a 10-inch ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Brown the chops well on both sides, 4 to 6 minutes.
4. Transfer the skillet to the oven and roast the chops until they register 125 degrees on an instant-read thermometer (for medium rare), 6 to 8 minutes.
5. Transfer the chops to a platter, tent loosely with foil and let rest 5 minutes. Serve with the mint relish.

**Note:** *This recipe assumes the use of domestic lamb. If using New Zealand or Australian lamb, the chops will probably be much smaller, so you'll need to buy a few extra. They will also cook faster, so adjust cook times accordingly and be careful not to overcook.*

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## **Maple Nut Goodie Bars (Makes 64 bars)**

### Ingredients:

1 (12-ounce) bag semisweet chocolate chips (2 cups)  
1 (11.5-ounce) bag milk chocolate chips (2 cups)  
2 cups butter or margarine  
1 cup peanut butter  
1 (12-ounce) can cocktail peanuts (2 1/2 cups)  
1/2 cup evaporated milk  
1 (4-serving size) box vanilla pudding and pie mix (not instant)  
1 (2-pound) bag powdered sugar (7 1/2 cups)  
2 teaspoons maple flavor

Directions:

1. Line a 15×10×1-inch jelly roll pan with foil. Butter or spray foil with cooking spray.
2. In a large saucepan, melt chocolate chips and 1 cup of the butter over low heat, stirring frequently.
3. Remove saucepan from heat; stir in peanut butter until well blended.
4. Spread half of mixture in prepared pan. Freeze 10 minutes or until set, then place pan in refrigerator.
5. Meanwhile, stir peanuts into remaining chocolate mixture. Set aside.
6. Melt remaining 1 cup butter in large saucepan over low heat. Using a wire whisk, gradually stir in evaporated milk, then stir in the pudding mix. Cook until mixture is slightly thickened, stirring constantly. DO NOT BOIL.
7. Remove saucepan from heat. Stir in powdered sugar and maple flavor until well blended. Cool slightly, about 10 minutes.
8. Carefully spread pudding mixture over chilled chocolate layer. Refrigerate 30 minutes.
9. Stir reserved chocolate-peanut mixture. Drop by spoonfuls onto chilled pudding layer, spread to cover. Refrigerate at least 3 hours or until firm. Bring to room temperature before cutting into 8 rows by 8 rows. Store in the refrigerator.

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**Fresh Berries and Cream Salad Squares (Serves 9)**

**Note:** *This recipe was submitted by Dorothy B, a loyal commissary shopper and a DeCA employee. She says this is one of the most requested dishes at her holiday gatherings for other overseas employees and service members. Because Dorothy lives in Okinawa, some of the fresh fruits called for in this recipe aren't always available, so be sure to check out her suggested substitutions below.*

Ingredients:

- 1 (3-ounce) package raspberry- or strawberry-flavored gelatin
- 1 cup boiling water
- 3/4 cup cold water
- 1/4 teaspoon finely shredded lemon peel
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3/4 cup fresh red raspberries or sliced strawberries
- 3/4 cup fresh blueberries or blackberries
- 2/3 cup whipping cream
- 4 ounces cream cheese (1/2 an 8-ounce package)
- 1/3 cup sifted powdered sugar
- 1/4 cup chopped sliced almonds or pecans, toasted

Directions:

1. Place gelatin in a medium bowl; add 1 cup boiling water and stir for 2 minutes or until gelatin is completely dissolved.
2. Stir in cold water and lemon juice; cover and chill until partially set. Gelatin should be the consistency of unbeaten egg whites. Stir in berries; pour mixture into an 8×8-inch baking pan and chill until firm.
3. Meanwhile, beat whipping cream just until soft peaks form. Add cream cheese and powdered sugar; beat until fluffy (mixture will thicken as it is beaten).
4. Carefully spoon cream cheese mixture over berry mixture, spreading evenly to the edge of the

pan. Cover and chill at least 6 and up to 24 hours.

5. Sprinkle toasted nuts over chilled salad, cut into squares and serve.

Notes: If fresh berries are not available, substitute fresh papaya, plums or other locally grown fruit that is not too high in water content. Dorothy is a keen calorie watcher, too. For a lower-calorie dish, she uses sugar-free gelatin, light cream cheese and reduces the powdered sugar called for by about 2 tablespoons.

**-DeCA-**

**About DeCA:** *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth more than \$4,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*